

Telling Our Story

what's up, DOC!



A snow leopard with her cub photographed in early 2012 from a craggy peak in Afghanistan by the Wildlife Conservation Society.

Wildlife Conservation Day

In the remote Wakhan corridor in northeastern Afghanistan, efforts to protect the endangered snow leopard have proved so successful that the region now boasts a robust population of the magnificent big cats. The USAID project has been helping the local community in Wakhan to fit satellite-collars on the snow leopards in order to track the animals and their preferred habitats. This helps the community to understand which areas to avoid when grazing livestock, thereby minimizing conflict between snow leopards and herders, who increasingly view the cat as a threat to their livelihood.

With support from USAID, Wildlife Conservation Society has been conserving wildlife and improving local livelihoods in Afghanistan since 2006. The project has helped Wakhan's livestock herders as well as snow leopard conservation, with all the potential knock-on benefits for the area such as media and tourist interest.

The photo shows one of the three snow leopards who were recently fitted with satellite collars. The entire process was documented by a National

Geographic film crew and the world will get to watch the extraordinary story on television as part of special programming during Big Cat Week, which is an extension of a campaign to save the world's big cats.

Promoting the conservation and protection of endangered species, the U.S. State Department has declared December 4, Wildlife Conservation Day and calls on individuals around the globe to join the fight by signing its Wildlife Pledge to help save imperiled wild animals.



In a first for Afghanistan, three snow leopards were fitted with satellite collars, thereby helping local herders track the animals and avoid their habitats

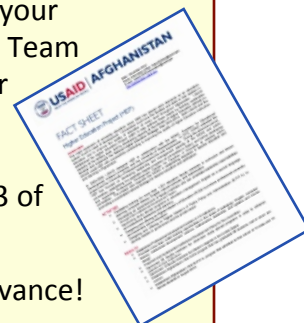
Tip of the Week

**Calling all CORs!
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Good news... it's time to update your project Fact Sheets!

Every project Fact Sheet needs to be updated and delivered to your friendly DOC Team by December 13. And yes, that is December 13 of this year.

Thanks in advance!



New York Times and VOA reporters cover USAID Education Program

Reporters from The New York Times, VoA, Afghan television and ISAF radio visited Kabul Education University's Master of Education (M.Ed.) degree program on December 2. This inspiring program provides Afghan students a rare opportunity to earn masters degrees in Afghanistan, and half of those currently enrolled are women. Sixty-three students have already graduated from the program. It has been over a year since the program was successfully transferred from USAID's Higher Education Program (HEP) to the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) and it is proving as popular as ever.

Forzen Abed, who is now the only female vice-chancellor at Parwan University, spoke passionately about the program's effect on her career. "The programme has tackled the problem of going abroad to earn a master degree for the instructors of the Rabbani's Education University. This is a good and effective program," deputy manager of the



Reporters from The New York Times, VoA, Tolo TV, 1TV and ISAF radio visited Kabul Education University's Master of Education (M.Ed.) degree program

Higher Education project in Afghanistan Wahid Omer said, adding that improved capacity of teachers is evident and that some have already received promotions. Reporters interviewed Kabul Education University Chancellor Amanullah Hamidzai, program alumni, and several students.

Defying Violence Against Women

As the world marks November 25 as International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, USAID is making the United Nations' aims a reality in Afghanistan. USAID has helped Afghanistan's Department of Women's Affairs (DoWA) create new opportunities for women to engage with government in Herat and Farah in the west of the country.

USAID's Stability in Key Areas-West (SIKA-West) project has worked closely with DoWA and the Department of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (DRRD) on ways to include women in

decision-making. SIKA-West is a USAID-funded stabilization program that will help Afghanistan transition to long-term, Afghan-led sustainable development.

Its efforts are already bearing fruit in western Afghanistan. In Herat's Shindand district, seven women from a key development body are playing an active role on a committee that is focused on empowering women. It has proposed vocational training for women, including tailoring and agriculture/animal husbandry, as well as adult literacy programs.

The Herat Gender Working Group held its first meeting at the DRRD on November 10 and will continue to meet every week to develop specific proposals for action on gender-related issues. In Farah, DoWA produced a brochure titled Creating Lives Free of Violence. It provides information on Afghan laws on violence against women as well as contact details of local officials who can assist abused women. The Farah brochure has become a template for other districts in western Afghanistan, each of which is adapting it to its own needs, right down to providing local DoWA contact information.



A gender roundtable in progress

Multi-sector approach to address Gender-Based Violence



As part of the 16 Days of Activism to Prevent Violence against Women, USAID/Afghanistan's Gender Unit organized a seminar on gender-based violence for all Mission personnel. USAID Gender Advisor Mahmuda Rahman Khan opened the seminar by giving a motivational presentation on the U.S. Interagency Gender-Based Violence Strategy. Following the presentation, participants engaged in a lively discussion gauging the successes of various programs and activities funded by U.S. agencies with a common goal to prevent violence against women in Afghanistan. The participants called for a multi-sector approach in addressing this issue, as declared in the Interagency Strategy. The seminar was held at the Muncy Center on Tuesday, December 04.

PHOTO OF THE WEEK

Firoza is one of 117 members of the Ghoryan Women Saffron Association in Herat province. The association received a loan from the Agricultural Development Fund (ADF), which gave Firoza and her fellow members access to fertilizers, pesticides, and harvest baskets. This allowed the saffron growers to increase productivity and product quality. This loan was the first under ADF's ZAHRA Sharia compliant financial product which caters to the financial needs of rural women already operating agribusinesses.

Project: USAID's Agricultural Credit Enhancement (ACE) Project

Location: Herat, Afghanistan

